

November 18, 2003

Prepared in consultation with:

WV State Technical Committee
WV Conservation Agency
WV Conservation Districts
WV Division of Forestry
WV Division of Natural Resources
USDI Fish and Wildlife Service

Introduction

West Virginia like most states in the northeast, has lost riparian and wildlife habitat due to changes in land use and management. Lands identified as terrestrial habitat in the NRI data have remained relatively static. However, the quality and distribution of these lands for specific wildlife species has been degraded or altered. Wetland habitats have received considerable federal and state protection, but the state suffers from forest fragmentation, loss of agriculture land and the degradation of riparian corridors. Degradation or loss of these habitats has adversely affected migratory and resident songbirds, and game birds such as bobwhite quail. The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) provides an opportunity to supply funds necessary to reverse habitat losses, increase diversity, and improve upland and riparian habitat.

West Virginia is a state comprised of approximately 80% forested habitat. Of this 80% almost 72% is in the pole timber size classification. This situation is unsuited to many species depending on early successional habitat for their lifecycle such as quail, ruffed grouse and woodcock.

I. State Objectives

The West Virginia objectives for WHIP were developed in consultation with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), WV Soil Conservation Agency (WVSCA), Conservation Districts (SCD) and members of the State Technical Committee. The objectives are designed to address statewide resource concerns identified at the local work group level led by the Conservation Districts.

West Virginia's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) objectives focus on the following habitat types: 1) Threatened and Endangered Species; 2) Riparian Area Wildlife; 3) Farm Wildlife; and 4) Woodland Wildlife.

The farm wildlife objectives focus upon northern bobwhite quail, ring-necked pheasant, small game and grassland songbirds. The goal of establishing 1000 acres of native grassland may increase quail populations and double the number of coveys where existing populations occur. Establishment of suitable grassland songbird habitat through delayed harvesting on 500 acres of cool-season grasses will benefit several species including reproducing populations of bobolink. Additional benefits to sympatric species of nesting birds and mammals will occur from the establishment and management of brood habitat, various plantings and a general increase in diversity.

The primary riparian wildlife habitat objective is the establishment of an additional 5 miles of riparian forested and herbaceous buffers along perennial streams, sinkholes, wetlands or other bodies of water. In addition, the establishment of fencing through partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Wildlife program to exclude livestock from riparian areas will be a major focus. The WHIP is also being utilized to enhance the recently approved WV CREP to exclude livestock from riparian corridors and act as a supplement in areas where CREP program requirements do not allow for financial assistance.

A secondary objective is woodland wildlife habitat. This primarily focuses on creating early successional forest for various species including ruffed grouse. Grouse populations have declined steadily in West Virginia for the past 15 years and may be attributed to the lack of early successional forest and suitable brood habitat.

In addition, opportunities that arise for establishment of habitat or preservation of habitat for threatened and endangered species will be aggressively pursued.

A summary of these objectives and estimated funding allocations is illustrated in the funding allocation breakdown below in Section II, Table 1.

Section II Table 1

| Habitat Type | Resource Concern Addressed | Target Species | FOTG Practices Used | Geographic Scope | FY03 Actual Expenditure | FY 04-07 Estimated Funding Allocation | % Goal for Funding FY 04-07 |
|----------------------|--|--|---|---|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Farm Wildlife | Extensive clean | Bobwhite Quail Ring-necked Pheasant | Conservation Tillage (329) Early Successional Habitat Mgmt. (647) Field Border (386) Filter Strips (393) Hedge Row Planting (422) | Native range as described in the WVWHET handbook | n | \$204,000 | 30% |
| | Loss of nesting habitat Improper forage | Grassland Songbirds Rabbit | Early Successional Habitat Mgmt. (647) Critical Area Planting (342) Field Border (386) Brush Control (314) Use Exclusion (472) Forage Harvest Management (511) Pasture Planting (512) | Entire State | | | |
| Riparian Habitat | Poor nesting & feeding areas near streams due to mowing & livestock access | Woodcock Songbirds | Riparian Forest Buffer (391) Stream Crossing (728) Tree/Shrub Establishment (612) Use Exclusion (472) Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390) Filter Strip (393) Fence (382) Critical Area Planting (342) | Entire State | \$94,150 | \$340,000 | 50% |
| Woodland Wildlife | Lack of woody understory for nesting and feeding | Grouse Squirrel Turkey | Forest Opening (647) Herbaceous Forest Opening (647) Permanent Food Plots (647) Field Border (386) Brush Management (314) Use Exclusion (472) Forest Site Preparation (490) | Entire State | \$86,689 | \$122,400 | 18% |
| Mods/T&E | endangered bats and riparian fencing for | Clubshell Mussel Indiana Bat Virginia Big-eared Bat | Use Exclusion (472) Riparian Forest Buffer (391) | Entire State | \$20,550 | \$13,600 | 2% |
| | | | | TOTAL | \$280,956 | \$680,000 | 100.00% |

III. Relationship to National-State priorities

The state priorities complement the national buffer initiative through establishment of filter strips and riparian buffers. The national WHIP priority is to increase northern bobwhite quail populations and expand acreage of native grasses. West Virginia will focus on farmland wildlife and riparian area habitat including species such as northern bobwhite quail, eastern cotton-tailed rabbit, American woodcock and grassland songbirds.

West Virginia lies almost at the northern limit of the bobwhite quail range. The topography and the lack of large tracts of cropland results in relatively sparse, isolated populations that are located primarily in the eastern panhandles and Ohio River valley of West Virginia. These isolated populations are experiencing declines largely as a result of lack of cover from predation, thick sod cover and limited crop residues.

Songbirds occur throughout the state, frequently using grasslands for a variety of life functions and are good overall indicators of grassland health. However, management for grassland birds is difficult and complex. Because grasslands depend on disturbance to persist, habitat that is suitable for a species one year may be unsuitable the following year. Moreover, each grassland species has unique habitat requirements, and management that favors one species may preclude others. WHIP will be able to assist landowners with good grassland management that favors both livestock production and nesting and feeding habitat while taking into account farming operations.

The American woodcock numbers have been declining steadily due to the loss of early successional habitats, wetland and riparian corridors. In the past 30 years, woodcock populations have declined substantially in the northeast, one of their major breeding grounds.

The partnership with the USFWS Partners for Wildlife program has worked exceedingly well throughout the state in excluding livestock from riparian corridors. WHIP funding is used to purchase materials while USFWS installs fence.

The practices used to address state wildlife priorities are based upon detailed habitat assessment and wildlife species requirement for acreage composition, habitat quality and distribution of habitat elements. A holistic approach is based upon the NRCS Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) standard. A numerical evaluation is completed to insure a good or excellent habitat management system is planned and implemented. For any individual WHIP contract several species may be managed for depending on the habit types available and land owners interests.

IV. Funding Needs - Fiscal Year 2004

| West Virginia Financial Assistance Request | Total Partners Financial Assistance Match | Technical Assistance Match |
|--|---|-------------------------------|
| \$680,000 | \$170,000 | \$632,400 |

V. State Ranking Criteria

Separate ranking criteria are used in West Virginia to help ensure uniformity of program funding among the major habitat types. Ranking criteria also reflects partner involvement and administrative tracking components. Point values have not changed in order to maintain comparative scores with existing applications. The ranking criteria are located in Appendix I.

VI. Accomplishments in FY 98 - 03

| Applications Received: | 703 |
|---|--------------------|
| P.F. STATE OF THE | |
| Funds Obligated | \$1,640,559 |
| | A0 00 = 500 |
| Dollar Value of Applications Received: | \$3,285,500 |
| | |
| Approved Contracts: | 479 |
| | |
| Acres Contract: | 57,568 ac |
| | |
| Dollar Value of Participant Contributions: | \$866,875 |
| Total Calabo of Calabo paint Continuation of | ¥555,5.5 |
| Acres pland W Habitat | 49,824 ac |
| Auto plana W Habitat | 70,0 <u>2</u> 7 d0 |
| Aaros of Dinarian Wildlife Habitat | 7.424.00 |
| Acres of Riparian Wildlife Habitat | 7,424 ac |
| A (T) () | |
| Acres of Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat | 320 ac |
| | |
| Stream Improvem ts for A atic Wildlife | ~3.1 mi |
| | |

VII. Changes From Previously Submitted Plan

The cost list has been modified to reflect changes in some practices and costs (see attachments).

This proposal may be modified in the future based on changing program requirements. Any changes will be based on recommendations from the West Virginia State Technical Committee and approval of the State Conservationist.

VII. Attachments

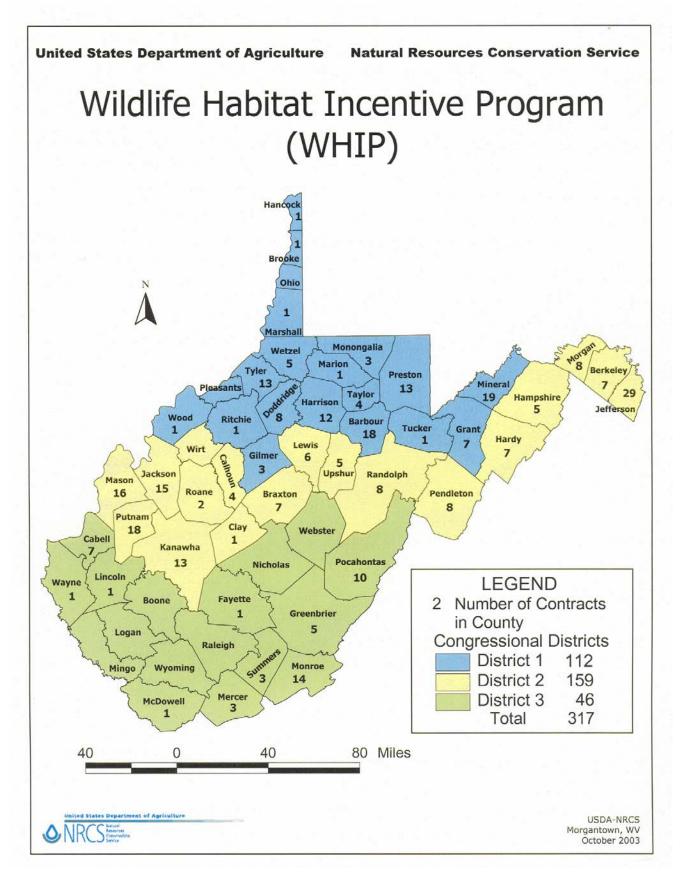
Current WHIP Contract Map by Congressional District

2004-07 WHIP Ranking Criteria

2004-07 WHIP Cost List

2004-07 WHIP Labor Rates

ACTIVE WHIP CONTRACTS



WHIP LABOR RATES FOR 2004-07

Labor Rates: 1/

Labor Rate (manual hand) = \$8.00/hr Labor Rate (skilled laborer) = \$10.00/hr

Equipment Rates:

Chainsaw and/or power equipment + Operator = \$12.50/hr $^{1/2}$ Tractor (>30 hp) & Attachment + Operator = \$45.00/hr $^{1/2}$ Small tractor (<30 hp), 4-wheeler or Equivalent & Attachment + Operator = \$20.00/hr Backhoe + Operator = \$45.00/hr Excavator + Operator = \$70.00/hr Machine Tree Planter + Operator = \$46.00/hr $^{1/2}$

| Bulldozer Horsepower | Comparative Equivalent | Acceptable Hourly Rate |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 55-89 | D-4 | \$50.00 2/ |
| 90-129 | D-5 | \$65.00 2/ |
| 130-165 | D-6 | \$70.00 2/ |
| 166+ | | \$95.00 ^{2/} |

^{1/}Based on SIP Rates

^{2/} Price Includes Operator

^{*}All prices are inclusive of parts, maintenance costs, incidental expenses, etc.